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ABSTRACT

This newsletter describes mentoring programs that have been successful in improving the academic achievement of at-risk Hispanic American youth. "Mentoring Programs Bring Results" (L. F. Cavazos) discusses how mentoring programs can help Hispanic American youth develop the skills needed for success while preserving their cultural identity. "Mentors: Effective Role Models, Advisors, 'Gate Openers'" (J. Petrovich) discusses the roles of mentors and emphasizes the need for comprehensive support programs in youth programming. "National Policymakers Are Mentors in ASPIRA Program" describes a leadership program that includes internships in the District of Columbia. "30-Year-Old Mentor Group Keeps Pace with Miami's Changes" describes a program that uses bilingual mentors. "Project Mentor: Adult Attention for Kids Who Need It" describes a lunchtime program in Austin (Texas) that uses mentors from the business community. "'Guardian Angels' Work with Young Women in New York" describes a program that links professional Hispanic American women with girls of similar background. "Mentors Play Major Role in Dropout Prevention" describes the role of mentors in a career development program in Denver (Colorado). "Program Uses Video and Mentoring to Aid Literacy" describes a mentoring program in San Antonio (Texas) that uses videotaping to maintain student interest. "PBS Mentoring Documentary Now Available" describes an hour-long videotape about mentoring. A 12-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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over national competitiveness and the need to prepare an increasingly non-traditional group of workers for future work. Whatever the rationale for creating a mentoring program, such programs are clearly effective mechanisms for providing supportive adult relationships to youth. Because positive mentoring networks are not readily available to poor and minority youth, mentoring programs can fill a real void.

Young people need sustained supportive relationships with mentors. A problem with many existing mentoring programs is their short, "one-shot" approach. Optimally, successful mentoring approaches for youth, particularly minority and urban poor youth, should:

- *Provide ongoing contact with adult role models.* At ASPIRA, formal mentoring opportunities are complemented by ongoing, informal access to responsive adults.
- *Facilitate adult contacts who have "been there" and made it.* A successful product of the students' own environment, an adult who has successfully negotiated the barriers young people are currently facing—poverty, parents with low levels of education, overcrowded schools with decaying facilities, racism, the quick-riches attractiveness of the drug culture—give a powerful example to students: they can do it, too.
- *Seek the involvement of adults who are ethnically and culturally attuned to the mentees' background, who truly believe in the innate potential of all youth, and who care about them.* The natural activity between two people of the same cultural and ethnic background is advantageous for a number of reasons. It decreases the need for mentor training and increases the psychosocial accessibility of the mentor to the mentee. Youth need to feel accepted and appreciated by their mentors for the experience to be fruitful.
- *Include group sessions.* Programs should provide mechanisms for young people to come together to analyze and reflect upon their mentoring experience. The support of peers is vital, particularly in the teenage years. And the effect of the mentoring experience on their own personal growth and on self-awareness and self-esteem increases as a result of this collective experience.
- *Incorporate a stipend for student interns.* Many mentored internships require a commitment of time which many students would otherwise use for part-time work. Internships might also require transportation or office attire whose cost presents a barrier to potential participants from poor families.
- *Develop a network.* Many of ASPIRA's current mentors were involved with the organization as students. ASPIRA works to maintain contact with and between former students and mentors through alumni activities, newsletters, and directories.

Mentoring is an important piece of working with young people. However, the variety of needs that young people have requires more than access to and interaction with role models and mentors. The progress of poor minority urban youths requires a comprehensive set of services which addresses their needs to be motivated, to feel good about themselves, to acquire personal and intellectual skills, and to work for a goal larger than themselves.

"Mentoring" Origin

The idea of "mentoring" comes from mythology: the hero Ulysses asked his friend Mentor to counsel and guide Ulysses' son Telemachus.

National Policymakers Are Mentors In ASPIRA Program

Some people say that the only thing worse than being a teenager is being around them. Yet, over the past five years, some 600 high school juniors and seniors, and more than 300 volunteer adult mentors, have explored new experiences together, and they're finding out that they're not only learning a lot—they're having fun.

These student-mentor partnerships are being fostered through the ASPIRA Association, founded in 1961 by parents and community leaders alarmed by the high dropout rate among New York City's Hispanic students and by the poor social and economic conditions in the Puerto Rican community.

Nearly 30 years later, one of ASPIRA's most successful initiatives has been the Public Policy Leadership Program (APPLP), a year-long experience that dramatically expands and strengthens leadership skills among Puerto Rican and Latino youth.

"ASPIRA's efforts to develop leadership capabilities among youth are particularly important today when the Hispanic population is growing at a rate five times faster than the overall population," says Arcadio Torres-Arroyo, ASPIRA national coordinator for leadership development. "Our society will be increasingly dependent on Latinos and other minorities, so it is important to develop a strong group of young leaders, not only capable of speaking out on behalf of the Hispanic community, but also able to create opportunities for future Hispanic participation at all levels of our society."

Through ASPIRA's 92 high school-based clubs (located in Miami, Chicago, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Trenton, Camden, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Puerto Rico), students sign up for the leadership program. They attend 15 weeks of seminars where facilitators help them study local, state, and national public policy. These activities are all complemented by field trips and discussions with local leaders and policymakers.

"The second component of the program involves mentoring," Torres-Arroyo says. "Students intern with individuals who serve as role models from local businesses, government offices and educational institutions. Interns observe their volunteer mentors in daily activities, accompany them to meetings, and assist them with tasks that reinforce what they learned in the leadership seminars."

The final component, a four-to-six-week paid internship in Washington, DC, challenges the program's most outstanding students to use their leadership skills and exposes them to government processes. In past years, APPLP students have interned with an impressive group of national policymakers including Patricia Diaz-Dennis, FCC commissioner; Virginia Rodriguez, Director of Public Affairs at "The Washington Post"; Congressman Jaime B. Fuster (D-PR); and Donna Alvarado, director of ACTION.

"We are providing Latino youth with much-needed exposure to a variety of career and professional options, and giving them the tools to learn how to be

A recent group of ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program national interns gathers with California Congressman Esteban Torres (lower right) in Washington, DC.

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A SPECIAL REPORT ON MENTORING

PLUS FROM PROJECT PLUS AND THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Mentoring is becoming a component of many youth-oriented professions and programs across the country; it is proving to be an effective way to provide adult guidance for young people who need it.

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)—partner with the Capital Cities/ABC television network in a long-term national literacy promotion effort called PLUS (Project Literacy U.S.)—is working to call attention to mentoring as a means not only to literacy and academic achievement but also to career and self-esteem goals for young people. To that end, PBS created a mentoring project called "One PLUS One." A documentary by that name aired on PBS last fall, and current related activities include a series of newsletters designed to show important American organizations how mentoring can work—and, ideally, to encourage those organizations and their members to create and support mentoring programs in their own arenas.

Mentoring Programs Bring Results

By Lauro F. Cavazos
United States Secretary of Education

Young people are entering adolescence at a significantly younger age today than in previous generations; as a result, youths aged 10, 11, and 12 are making fateful choices that can affect their entire life course.

The risks that all young people face are compounded for those who are poor, members of racial or ethnic minorities, or recent immigrants. These youths often attend the weakest schools, have fewer successful adult role models, have access to the least adequate health services, and have the fewest clearly visible paths to opportunities in the mainstream.

Hispanics are the fastest-growing minority group in the United States today. By the year 2015, Hispanics will outnumber blacks as the largest minority group. For many young Hispanics, options and opportunities are elusive because they do not feel part of the mainstream.

For these youngsters, studies are finding that those who receive support from a mature, caring adult—a mentor—are more likely to finish high school and more likely to hold a job. These are significant behavior changes. Through mentoring, Hispanic leaders can provide the guidance, encouragement, and support that will enable young people to seek higher skill levels and increase their options for a more productive adult life. This does not mean a loss of cultural identity; rather, Hispanic cultural identity can enhance the mainstream by bringing together the best of all worlds.

Young people—Hispanic and all others—awakened by an effective mentor are much more likely to realize their potential, and in that potential is the future of our country.

Dr. Cavazos' comments are adapted from his introduction to a new 13-minute videotape titled "Mentoring Hispanic Youth." The video, excerpted from the acclaimed PBS mentoring documentary "One PLUS One," focuses on the strong relationship between a Hispanic mentor and her young mentee. "Mentoring Hispanic Youth" is available at cost. For further information, or to place an order, call or write Project PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. (412) 622-1491

Mentors' Roles Vary

Mentors aren't expected to take on the role of parents, professional counselors, or social workers. But some of their traits will also be part of the mentor's role: listening, nurturing, supporting.

—Adapted from "Mentoring Manual," published by the Abell Foundation, Baltimore, MD

Mentors: Effective Role Models, Advisors, "Gate Openers"

By Janice Petrovich
National Executive Director,
The ASPIRA Association, Inc.

History and our own experience confirm that mentors have been around since men and women have been on this earth. Mentors are those caring people who nurture us. Mentors are those who engage, support, and sustain us at particular times. Mentors are talented and able people who take the time and trouble to work with us in a comprehensive and constructive way. Mentors are those influential people who have the power—through who or what they know—to promote our welfare, training, or career advancement. In sum, the roles of mentors include those of role model, sponsor, "gate opener," advisor, and teacher.

For the children of professional parents, positive role models and potential mentors abound through the network of people their parents know. Thus a parent's former college roommate, now Dean of Admissions at an Ivy League University, can serve a gate-opening function for a college-bound youth. Thus an uncle who is a dentist can allow his niece to hang around the office and observe what he does. Thus a neighbor who teaches mathematics can help a friend's child in an informal, individual way to master difficult concepts.

But what of the children in whose families and neighborhoods these mentors are lacking? Or, worse yet, what of the children for whom the available role models offer the promise of advancement in an underground, negative world? Clearly they also need positive contacts and networks to advance socially and economically. With the concern about youth and drugs, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, and delinquency, some of the literature refers to mentoring as "compensatory adult contact." Mentoring programs have developed from a perceived need to offset negative environmental influences.

The growth in mentoring programs can also be attributed to a growing concern

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Program Sees Results

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Miami recently surveyed its volunteers and the parents of the children they mentor about the effectiveness of the program. The results are impressive:

- 85% of the respondents reported an increase in mentee self-esteem and confidence
- 63% reported an increase in school grades
- 56% said youngsters' relationships with families had improved; 69% said peer relationships were better; and 66% reported more positive mentee relationships with teachers
- 86% said youngsters in the program experienced increased exposure to cultural and educational activities

Project Mentor: Adult Attention For Kids Who Need It

Millions of kids across this country are starving, but they're not hungry for a balanced meal. They're starved for adult attention.

In Austin, Texas, the public school system and IBM decided to combat this shortcoming—which has been linked with an array of dysfunctional behaviors, including dropping out of school—with a cooperative solution that has produced results. The program, "Project Mentor," links employees of businesses involved in partnerships with Austin schools with children in kindergarten through 12th grade. Volunteers visit their mentees once a week at school, usually during lunch, to help them with homework, talk over problems, or discuss careers, books or even the latest movies.

More than 900 matches have been made since Project Mentor was introduced into the school system in 1987. Organizers credit the mentoring relationships with improving school attendance, building self-confidence, and improving the attitudes of the children who participate.

"One reason the mentoring relationships are so successful is our training program," says Rich Labuda, Project Mentor administrator and an IBM employee who is on loan to the Austin School District through IBM's Faculty Loan Program. "We hold a training session to help mentors communicate with and understand at-risk kids, provide ways of coping with a lack of self-confidence, and, in general, to provide tips on how to be a friend and advocate."

But even a program as comprehensive as Project Mentor didn't prepare Bob McLaughlin emotionally for his relationship with Jose, an 11-year-old whose endearing personality and tough family background have tugged at McLaughlin's heart.

"I was taken aback at first with just how insignificant an education was to Jose," says McLaughlin, a manager at IBM who was recruited into the program last year by a co-worker. "He had no concept of goals or goal-setting. They were meaningless. What upset me most was that there was nothing I could do to get through to him."

After three semesters together—much of which, McLaughlin says, has been a struggle— he and Jose have finally reached a turning point.

"We had started to make some real progress and then, not long ago, Jose began to regress," McLaughlin says. "His grades were just terrible and I couldn't seem to reach him. Finally, out of frustration, I came down hard on him—I was acting like a concerned father, I suppose—and the next week he started to get unbelievably good grades. Later, he told me that he had studied extra hard because he didn't want me to be mad."

Jose says, "Before I met Bob, stuff used to be a lot harder. He helps me study and we talk about how my grades can be improved. I used to do real bad in spelling, but we go to the library and he helps me practice."

"I've grown to love Jose," McLaughlin says. "He's a very bright and creative kid with a lot of potential; I just wish I could do more. I've asked the school if I can follow him as long as he wants—through high school, college, whatever. I'll put him through school if necessary."

While this relationship may be unique, there is a thread of commonality among Project Mentor matches: the mentors genuinely care about their students and have tackled some delicate issues to make sure the children get the attention and support they need.

For instance, Sandy, a 14-year-old eighth grader at O'Henry Middle School, lives in an at-risk neighborhood where many of the children have been in trouble. Her grades aren't too bad, but she needs special attention and guidance.

"Last year, Sandy was involved in a number of fights in school," says Assistant Principal Jose Mata, "but this year she was matched with Lupe Morin and began attending the special monthly workshops we conduct on subjects such as peer pressure and conflict resolution. We've seen a dramatic improvement in Sandy this year. Her fighting record is 0-0, and I'm very proud of her."

"Sandy's father's initial reaction to the program was exactly what my father's reaction would have been: suspicious and negative," says Morin, who became a mentor through the Mexican-American Business and Professional Women's Association. "That's why similar backgrounds help. I communicated with her parents in Spanish and explained that I respected their concerns and I was not trying to replace them as parents. I let them know that my role is to help Sandy maintain or improve her grades, help her set study habits, help her learn more about career options, and just be able to help her with projects."

While Morin says Sandy's father is still somewhat reserved about the program, Sandy is showing signs that she will not become a dropout statistic—she's asked her principal for help before she's entered fights and her grades have improved.

"Who would have thought that this would work?" says Rich Labuda. "You'd think that kids might think it's 'weird' to have an adult come to school once a week and have lunch with them, but the reaction is just the opposite. In fact, the other kids are almost jealous of those children who have mentors."

For further information, contact Rich Labuda, Project Mentor Administrator, Austin Independent School District, 6100 Guadelupe, Austin, Texas 78752. (512) 451-8411

"Guardian Angels" Work With Young Women in New York

If you've ever wondered what it would be like to have a guardian angel looking after you, just ask the more than 150 girls who have participated in the New York-based Las Madrinas program. While the girls' guiding influence may not be exactly "celestial," it's probably the next best thing—a "madrina" who affectionately watches over their well-being and best interests, often from adolescence into young adulthood.

Las Madrinas, a project of HACER Inc. Hispanic Women's Center, pairs profes-

"It's Crucial for These Kids to Have Something Positive..."

Raquel Diaz and Teresa Vallejo have a lot in common. They're both 18-year-old Hispanic college students from Philadelphia who have learned through ASPIRA that no dream is beyond their reach.

But perhaps neither girl would be doing so well today if they hadn't both had the experience of serving as interns under Lydia Hernandez-Velez, vice president and manager of corporate real estate at Corestates Bank.

"Besides spending time in the workplace together, Lydia and I became friends," says Diaz. "She's told me about the things she faced when she was my age, how she made decisions in her life, and why it's important to think of yourself even when you're being influenced by family pressures. Before I met Lydia, I had never met a Hispanic woman who had such a positive background."

"It's crucial for these kids to have something positive," says Hernandez-Velez, who knows what she's talking about since she herself was an "Aspirante" when she was in high school in the late '60s. "The messages they're getting are extremely mixed and they're very much grasping for something. I feel a responsibility as a professional, who happens to be Hispanic and a woman, to communicate what's possible and to help them acquire concrete skills."

One way Hernadez-Velez has tried to pass along the lessons that she was taught more than 20 years ago is by strengthening the girls' leadership skills through community activities and invitations that are extended to her because her husband is an elected official in Philadelphia.

"This gives them a chance to talk with people in local government and it shows them that elected officials are human. I believe it's important for them to know that the way you resolve issues is by people talking to people," says the mentor.

Vallejo's change in attitude since entering the program is proof that Lydia's message is being heard. "Before I knew what the public policy program was all about, I had my doubts," she says. "I thought it would be the same old thing, but it's been great hands-on experience being under the wing of a mentor, learning how to take on more responsibility and beginning to speak out on issues. Lydia has helped me do this. I feel very lucky to know her."

Continued from page 2

leaders," says Torres-Arroyo. "Ultimately, our goal is to motivate them to come back and use what they've learned for the benefit of the community."

In addition to the Public Policy Leadership Program, ASPIRA national programs include the National Health Careers Program and the Hispanic Community Mobilization for Drop Out Prevention. Mentoring relationships are an integral part of both.

For further information on ASPIRA or the Public Policy Leadership Program, contact Arcadio Torres-Arroyo, Leadership Coordinator, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 340, Washington, DC. 20036. (202) 835-3600

30-Year-Old Mentor Group Keeps Pace with Miami's Changes

Thirty years ago, Miami was a sleepy Florida city, just another haven for tourists and sun worshippers. Today it's a cosmopolitan urban community and a classic American melting pot, with a population that's 40 percent Hispanic.

One organization working hard to keep pace with those changes is Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Miami, founded in the late 1950s. Big Brothers/Big Sisters is a thriving mentoring program, focusing on one-to-one relationships between caring adults and young people ages 6 through 18.

"Right now we have 325 matches, double what there were 5 years ago," says Executive Director Lydia Muniz. But, she adds, "Only about 20 percent of our 'Littles' and about the same number of our 'Bigs' are Hispanic." Parents, she believes, are reluctant to entrust their children to adults outside the family—until they realize the benefits the program brings to children.

The organization tries to match "Bigs" and "Littles" by race and culture as well as interests. "Common backgrounds can ease communication, especially when the relationship is new," says Muniz. "And, in the case of a newly arrived Hispanic family working to learn English, having a bilingual Hispanic volunteer is incredibly effective, not just for the child but for the whole family."

The time commitment of Big Brothers and Big Sisters is major—3 to 5 hours a week for a minimum of a year—but more and more people, including Hispanic volunteers, are making the commitment.

One of those volunteers is Miami attorney Damaris Garcia, who, before she completed law school, was a social worker with Big Brothers/Big Sisters. "I saw first-hand how well the program works, and became a Big Sister right after law school," she says. "I want to give something back to the community."

Garcia was matched one year ago with 9-year-old Sasha Haro, whose parents had recently been through a difficult divorce. "Sasha had to cope with many changes in her life, and helping her deal with them has been one of my goals," says Garcia. Also among her goals: encouraging Sasha to read more, exposing her to other cultures, helping her deal with peer pressure—and just plain having fun.

The relationship is working well; the Big and Little Sisters clearly take pleasure in each other's company, whether it's going to a special event or just fixing lunch together. "Sasha's a big part of my life," says Garcia. "I can't imagine not doing this."

She urges others to consider mentoring. "Most people can find the time if they try, and it doesn't take a lot of money," she says. "And what you get back is a thousand times more than what you give."

For information, contact: Lydia Muniz, Executive Director, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Miami, 100 Almeria Ave., Suite 310, Coral Gables, FL 33134. (305) 441-9354

Big Sister Damaris Garcia and Little Sister Sasha Haro enjoy each other's company.

Mentor Mary Ann Vasquez says she doesn't want her mentee to learn "the hard way, like me."

mentee) as she can, but she also feels it's important for Katrina to take some initiative.

"I've tried to be supportive without pushing too hard or expecting too much too soon," says Vasquez. "I've given Katrina my phone number and let her know that I'm here to listen to her. I know from experience that when there's a positive environment you feel that nothing is beyond your reach. I'd like to provide that support for Katrina, encourage her to set goals for herself, and leave her with an enthusiasm for learning. When I was a student, I didn't think anyone cared if I went to school or not and I ended up dropping out. I don't want her to have to learn the hard way, like me."

Unlike many dropouts. Vasquez was lucky enough to meet people who encouraged her. Eight years after leaving school, she obtained a GED and then spent another 10 years earning a college degree—a feat accomplished while raising four children.

David Vieyro, another SWAP Program mentor, wants to make sure his mentee, Mario, doesn't end up lacking a diploma, so he's stayed with Mario for three years to make sure he gets the encouragement he needs to reach his potential.

"Initially, my relationship with Mario was somewhat reserved," says Vieyro, a directory advertising consultant with US West. "A first generation Hispanic, he was shy and had a lot of family pressures. At one point, he was the sole breadwinner for his family. Given these dynamics, in the beginning, I think he was more concerned about just getting out of school, so I didn't push. We mainly did things such as go to the movies or baseball games. I don't think either of us knew how we wanted the relationship to develop."

That was three years ago. Today, Mario has visited the Vieyro home for dinner and has met David's family. He is interested in talking about potential jobs and hopes to attend college and become an engineer.

"Over the past few years we've talked about family pressures and how they affect him. I've tried to be supportive of the family, while at the same time making him aware that he has a right to have his own dreams," says Vieyro.

Fortunately, Mario's story is not unique to the SWAP program. Last year, 20 SWAP sites reported a 93 percent increase in retention, a 10 percent increase in attendance, and a 28 percent increase in grade point average.

For Mary Ann Vasquez, Katrina's progress is much more personal than statistics convey. "Katrina's had a hard time and I think she's just needed someone to be there and listen to her. I've seen her come out of her shell and she has a more positive attitude. Although I haven't been involved directly with her schoolwork, she tells me that she's doing better. I believe Katrina will make it, and that's the ultimate reward."

SWAP was originally funded by a variety of state sources including businesses, foundations, the Governor's Job Training Office, Colorado Community College and Occupational Education Systems, and the Colorado Department of Education. Each participating school has made a three-year commitment of staff and staff development time to ensure long-term institutionalization of the program. Technical and financial support has been gradually reduced, while the schools simultaneously have sought alternative funding sources. At the end of this year, the program is expected to be self-sustaining.

For further information, contact Susan Klein, SWAP Project Director, Colorado Alliance of Business, 600 Grant Street, Suite 204, Denver, CO 80203. (303) 832-9791

What Is Mentoring?

"Mentoring" describes a structured, enduring relationship between an adult and a young person, with the adult providing help, support, and guidance. Some programs focus on academic or career goals, and others stress friendship, but all aim to develop in the young person the skills and self-confidence necessary for a fulfilling life.

Program Uses Video and Mentoring to Aid Literacy

Many parents and teachers are horrified by the amount of time kids spend in front of the television set, but in San Antonio, Texas, teachers actually encourage it. In fact, they make it a mandatory school assignment.

The concept is all part of the San Antonio Youth Literacy (SAYL) program, a multi-faceted effort founded in 1984 by Harriet Marmon. Marmon, a CPA with a national accounting firm, made it a point to visit classrooms and talk about her profession. She began to realize that many of the kids she talked with didn't understand the words she used, much less the financial concepts she presented. The problem: they were functionally illiterate.

Her solution was SAYL, a program which uses videotaping and television as the "hook" to interest students and draw them into the educational cycle.

While SAYL has since expanded into a multi-faceted effort, there are three principal components: training students to be peer tutors, utilizing task forces of community leaders to visit the classes and present various topics, and one-on-one mentoring. Each facet weaves the use of video equipment into the program format. The kids use the equipment to record and critique other students' school assignments and projects, or use it as a creative outlet for new learning experiences—such as the student who created and produced a public service announcement that won a statewide contest and was then aired throughout Texas.

"Students are selected to participate in the program by their principals and guidance counselors," says volunteer Valerie Lester. "All classes are made up of one-third honor students, one-third average students, and one-third Correlated Language Arts (CLA) students—remedial students—so there's a dynamic synergy. When students first enter the program, they attend a Leadership Workshop for two weeks just prior to the start of school where they learn leadership and communication skills and peer tutoring techniques."

"The Leadership Workshops use some excellent role models," says Robert, a 17-year-old 11th grader at Sam Houston High School. "They spoke to us on a one-on-one basis and gave us advice on careers and life. We also learned how to

sional Hispanic women with girls of similar backgrounds to promote leadership and prevent school dropouts among Hispanic youth. Funded by the New York Community Trust and the Greater New York Fund/United Way, the extensive Las Madrinas network includes a support system to provide feedback to mentors, and a social service referral system that provides tutoring and special services.

The program also includes a 17-session leadership workshop where girls who are waiting for a madrina meet once a week for classroom discussions, lectures and excursions that explore adolescent concerns and careers.

The ultimate goal, says Center Director Norma Stanton, is to offer an adult a chance to help a young person make good choices in life. It's also a way of helping young people, on a one-to-one basis, to gain confidence in themselves, achieve their goals, and open up their worlds.

Madrinas are Latina professionals who are asked to commit to a minimum one-year relationship and to meet with their "ahijadas" twice a month. While academic support and encouragement are overriding goals, they are not the only purpose in most madrinas/ahijadas relationships, including that of Maribel Gonzalez and her ahijada, Elizabeth.

Like most 12-year-olds, shy Elizabeth is fascinated by the latest fashions and is more than a little "boy-crazy." But, unlike most of her peers, she comes from a strict home where makeup, blue jeans, and dancing are forbidden. Maribel, a savvy local retail sales manager for WKDM Radio in New York, initially found herself playing the part of mediator.

"Elizabeth's family is newly arrived in this country from Ecuador and is extremely religious and traditional," Gonzalez says. "The mother had some doubts and concerns about Elizabeth's participation in the program, so I had to work my way through by speaking with the family in Spanish and, initially, taking the mother with us to the movies or rollerskating—whatever we had planned for the day—or spending a lot of time at home with the entire family."

Madrina Maribel Gonzalez with her ahijada, Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth's mother saw for herself that their activities were just good fun, she showed more of a willingness to let her daughter participate.

"Now that we're able to go by ourselves, we talk a lot about the things that bother Elizabeth, such as wanting to meet boys, being shy, and the school activities she'd like to participate in," Gonzalez says. "Some of these things have been forbidden by her religion, so I try to stress that she needs to have better communication with her mother about what she wants. I've also spoken with her mother about being flexible and what it means to be a teenager growing up in New York City."

Gonzalez' role as a link among child, parent, and the outside world is not unusual; in fact, madrinas are encouraged to meet with parents informally to develop mutual trust, and to talk with them about topics such as the role of the madrina, raising children, their neighborhood schools, and different cultures. Madrinas and other professionals often speak at parent meetings to foster self-improvement—an important aspect of parental involvement. Parents also can learn about community resources and events through the "For Parents Only" newsletter.

"Exposing kids and their parents to a professional lifestyle is important," says madrina Esther Ruiz, Director of Communications for the New York Voter Assistance Commission. "I took my ahijada Denise to a career conference this past weekend, and the exposure was wonderful. Career counselors talked to her about the classes she needs to prepare her for the future, whether or not she sticks with her desire to become a surgeon."

Ruiz has introduced the ninth-grader to a 19-year-old pre-med student, and has spoken to her about the ASPIRA program, a national high school-based program which seeks to teach and develop skills among Hispanic youth (see page 2).

Norma Stanton says one of the most valuable benefits of the program is the chance to meet and make new friends, and have new learning and fun experiences. "It offers the ahijadas a chance to speak their minds, learn about themselves and others, and be part of a group with positive attitudes and goals," she says.

For further information, contact Norma Stanton, Executive Director, HACER Inc. Hispanic Women's Center, 611 Broadway, Room 812, New York NY 10012. (212) 254-1444

Benefits to Mentees

Mentoring isn't a panacea for all the problems facing young people and their families. But through mentors' sustained caring, interest, and acceptance, mentees may begin to think of themselves as worthy of this attention—and may apply their new self-confidence to other relationships and experiences.

—Adapted from "Mentoring Manual," published by the Abell Foundation, Baltimore, MD

Mentors Play Major Role in Dropout Prevention

Mary Ann Vasquez's four children are grown—the youngest is 18—and, by all standards, she should be taking a much-deserved rest from parenting. Instead, for the past three years she's spent her spare time working as a mentor for three students as part of the School to Work Action Program (SWAP), an initiative started in 1984 by the Colorado Alliance of Business. Beginning with two sites in Denver high schools, the program has grown to include 19 schools statewide.

"A key objective of SWAP has been to combat the problem of dropouts, especially within the Hispanic community," says SWAP Project Manager Susan Klein. "To accomplish this, we use a unique educational approach which includes an interdisciplinary core curriculum emphasizing high expectations, direct parental involvement, business participation through mentoring, and flexible school administration."

The mentoring component of SWAP is optional. Students who elect to participate are encouraged to spend a minimum of two hours per month during the school year with their mentors, but many mentors like to spend much more time than that with their students.

Vasquez, who is an equal employment manager at the U.S. Bureau of Mines, spends as much time with Katrina (her

Why Mentor?

Many youths grow up with a combination of opportunities and resources to help them, such as family, peers, religious and youth organizations, social agencies and schools. This is not always the case; some youths may not have enough social and personal resources available to them. Planned mentoring programs can help.
—Erwin Flaxman, Columbia University Teachers College

use the video equipment, and that has made me stronger. I want to be a lawyer and I know there's going to be a lot of public speaking. At first it was hard watching myself on video and having other people critique my presentations, but it's helped me to overcome shyness."

After students return to the workshop, they put their energies into serving as peer tutors to middle school students in remedial classes. During regular Leadership Classes, they develop assignments for the students and talk about problems they're having.

"I wanted so badly to be chosen for this program," says Rosemary, a 17-year-old who hopes to go into nursing. "I think it's a great honor, but quite honestly, I was a bit nervous about going to the classes. The kids didn't participate a lot at first and I thought they might not want to do the projects. But then we started having fun, especially when we used the video equipment. The experience has also taught me different things, because if I didn't know an answer, I had to look it up."

In conjunction with their peer tutoring activities, Leadership Class students also benefit from presentations made by volunteers and representatives from local businesses. Some programs teach life skills or career choices, while others focus on making students aware of their cultural heritage or instilling an appreciation of the arts.

"We have people from banks who speak to the kids about family budgets, credit and banking," says Lester. "There is also a woman we affectionately call 'the professional nag,' who volunteers by working one-on-one with kids to make sure they know how to fill out a college application and are aware of the financial resources available to them. Other volunteers work one-on-one with students who are likely to drop out of school, hoping to instill an understanding of the reality of life as a dropout."

"I came from a poor background with five kids, and when I grew up I didn't have a mentor," says Millie Deana, an office manager for a law firm and a SAYL volunteer for the past two years. "If I had had a mentor, I know I would be a lawyer today. If I can show just one child that it can be done, then it's worth it."

Deana's convictions and her desire to emphasize the importance of higher education are matched by her wish to give back to the Hispanic community. Her altruism didn't prepare her, however, for the emotional turmoil that came along with it.

"You're bringing yourself back into an environment that you fought so hard to get out of, and it brings back a lot of memories and insecurities," she explains. "This was very tough for me, but I realized that these kids were not going on to college unless someone was there to make them aware of another world out there that's approachable. That's why this mentor program is so vital."

Valerie Lester adds: "It's unfortunate that kids who have been labeled 'at-risk' are often considered to be less intelligent than other kids. Some of them come up with fabulous ideas; they just haven't been motivated or given the proper encouragement because many of these families do not have the conviction that an education is important. Without help, these kids are not going to cross that line."

Program executives say their efforts are showing results. Since the program's inception, 99 percent of the participating students have graduated from high school. SAYL currently operates in six schools with funding provided by private corporations.

For more information, contact Ann Boswell, SAYL, 700 N. St. Marys, Suite 900, San Antonio, TX 78205. (512) 299-1533

Students in the San Antonio Youth Literacy (SAYL) program at Edgewood High School use video equipment to polish presentation skills, enhance academic work, and help teach other students.

Pat Morita, the wise mentor/coach in the "Karate Kid" movies, hosts "One PLUS One," a documentary about mentoring.

PBS Mentoring Documentary Now Available

An acclaimed hour-long television documentary about mentoring is now available on videotape.

"One PLUS One," which aired on PBS last fall, follows four mentoring relationships through difficulties and joys:

- In Texas, Kim Ulmer helps 11-year-old Cambodian refugee Bun Rath So with his progress in school. She also helps Bun Rath's whole family adjust to life in America.
- In Colorado, Lucy Trujillo mentors 17-year-old Anna Hinojos, whose two older sisters dropped out of high school. The relationship is strong and productive—but Anna's future is still uncertain.
- In Indiana, blue-collar worker Bonnie Long mentors an eighth-grader named Mary. Bonnie and Mary have a remarkable friendship, and Bonnie works to help Mary realize that it's hard to find a good job without a high school diploma.
- In Washington, DC, journalist George Curry mentors Howard University freshman Tisha Derricotte, challenging her and demanding the best she can give.

Hosted by Pat Morita, the wise mentor/coach in the "Karate Kid" movies, "One PLUS One" is available for $25. To order or for further information, call or write Project PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. (412) 622-1491

Interested in Mentoring? Resources Are Available

One PLUS One, the PLUS mentoring project, has developed a number of publications and tapes with information and advice for school/community/business leaders, mentors, and mentoring program directors. They include:

Print

Beginning a Mentoring Program. Advice for launching a program, including tips on assessment, staffing, recruiting, matching, and funding. Many sample forms are included.

The Power of Mentoring with an introduction by Lee Iacocca. Collection of essays by several professionals, a mentor, and a mentee.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and The ASPIRA Association. Newsletter with features on how mentoring serves the Hispanic community.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and the National Education Association. Newsletter with features on how mentoring serves the school community.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and the National Urban League. Newsletter with features on how mentoring serves the African-American community.

A Youth Mentoring Program Directory compiled by One PLUS One and United Way of America. Lists national and local mentor programs with contact names and addresses.

Orientation/Training Videos

Milestones in Mentoring. Series of three video programs to orient mentors: "Dealing with Diversity" (30 minutes), "Making It Work" (60 minutes), and "Troubled Families" (30 minutes). Print guidelines accompany the programs, which are distributed on one cassette. Produced by One PLUS One with The BUDDY SYSTEM.

Other Videos
(all under 30 minutes)

College Students as Mentors
The Importance of Mentors in the Public School System
Mentoring African-American Youth
Mentoring Hispanic Youth

For more information on any of these resources, call or write:

One PLUS One
4802 Fifth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 622-1491

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4802 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

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